

Message Text

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43

ACTION SCCT-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 ISO-00 USSS-00 SY-04 EB-07

DOT-00 FAA-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 /083 W

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P 091110Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7649

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: APINS

SUBJ: DISPOSITION OF VC-10 HIJACKERS: ABU IYAD'S

PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: (A) TUNIS 7544

(B) TUNIS 7540

1. SUMMARY: IN PRESS CONFERENCE HERE DEC. 7 PLO LEADER ABU IYAD

CONFIRMED THAT FOUR HIJACKERS HAVE LEFT TUNISIA IN CUSTODY

OF PLO AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY WOULD BE "JUDGED." HE

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WOULD NOT RPT NOT GIVE DESTINATION OF HIJACKERS, NOR WOULD

HE CONFIRM THAT SEVEN OTHER FEDAYEEN HAD ALSO LEFT TUNISIA UNDER PLO AUSPICES. (GOT HAD EARLIER STATED THAT ALL ELEVEN FEDAYEEN HAD DEPARTED.) ABU IYAD CLAIMED THAT NO ARAB GOVT. HAD COLLABORATED IN VC-10 HIJACKING AND IN ANSWER TO QUESTION HE SAID PLO WOULD WELCOME EVENTUAL RECOGNITION BY US. END SUMMARY.

2. ABU IYAD, CLAIMING TO HAVE ARRIVED SECRETLY THREE DAYS EARLIER FOR TALKS WITH GOT OFFICIALS AND THE FEDAYEEN HELD IN CONNECTION WITH THE HIJACKING, GAVE PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 7 WHICH ADDED LITTLE TO PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE BASED ON GOT COMMUNIQUE REPORTED TUNIS 7544. ABU IYAD WOULD NOT STATE DESTINATION OF HIJACKERS OR JUST WHAT PLO PROPOSES TO DO WITH THEM, ALTHOUGH HE ANSWERED A QUESTION WITH A CURT "OF COURSE" THE FOUR HIJACKERS WOULD BE "JUDGED", AND THAT THIS WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS WHO MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO SPLIT FROM THE "MOTHER ORGANIZATION", PLO.

3. ARABIC LOCAL PRESS (BUT NOT FRENCH) DECEMBER 8 REPORTS ABU IYAD CLAIMED TO SPEAK ONLY ABOUT THE FOUR HIJACKERS, NOT THE SEVEN FEDAYEEN FROM ROME AND HOLLAND. THE SEVEN, HE SAID WERE NOT IN THE SAME POSITION AS THE HIJACKERS BECAUSE THE SEVEN HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO BOARD THE AIRCRAFT, AND HAD DONE SO UNDER PERSONAL ORDER OF ABU IYAD: AND BEFORE THAT THEY HAD BEEN UNDER PLO ORDERS. "ACCORDINGLY WHAT I HAD TO SAY CONCERNS ONLY THE FOUR, AND I SAY THAT THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT TUNIS WERE THE FOUR. AS FOR THE SEVEN, THERE IS NO PROBLEM WITH RESPECT TO THEM."

4. ABU IYAD SPECIFIED THAT NO ARAB GOVERNMENT HAD STOOD BEHIND THE HIJACKING. HOWEVER, HE WENT ON TO WARN "CERTAIN BROTHERLY ARAB STATES" AGAINST INTERFERING IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE "PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION" HE CAUTIONED THEM THAT THE PLO COULD MAKE MORE TROUBLE FOR SUCH STATES THAN THEY COULD MAKE FOR THE PLO.

5. ABU IYAD SPECIFICALLY REFUSED TO DEFEND THE HIJACKING, SAYING THAT HIS MOVEMENT CONDEMNS THE ACTION. HE SAID, THOUGH, THAT THE HIJACKERS ALL HAD LIVED IN REFUGEE CAMPS UNDER DAILY BOMBARDMENT BY THE ISRAELIS. HE SAID, "I LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HOPE THAT ON THE OCCASION OF THE HAPPY OUTCOME OF THIS INCIDENT, WORLD OPINION WILL COMPREHEND THAT NO PEACE IS POSSIBLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST WITHOUT RESPECT FOR THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE."

6. BRITISH PRIME MINISTER WILSON WAS CASTIGATED FOR CORDIALLY RECEIVING GOLDA MEIR AT THE MOMENT WHEN, ABU IYAD SAID, THREE YOUNG PALESTINIANS WERE VOLUNTEERING TO

TAKE THE PLACE OF THE BRITISH AIRCREW AS HOSTAGES TO THE HIJACKERS.

7. ABU IYAD SAID KING HUSSEIN IS PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME IN RENOUNCING ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS, THEREBY LEAVING THEM AT THE MERCY OF THE ISRAELIS. HUSSEIN'S MOVES WERE DESCRIBED AS IN CONTRADICTION TO THE DECISIONS OF THE RABAT SUMMIT WHICH HE HAD ACCEPTED.

8. IN ANSWER TO QUESTION, ABU IYAD SAID THE PLO WOULD WELCOME EVENTUAL RECOGNITION BY THE UNITED STATES. AT PRESENT, HE SAID, THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION IS UNDER ISRAELI PRESSURE. HOWEVER, JUST AS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAD AGITATED AT LENGTH AGAINST THE USG'S VIETNAM POLICY, ABU IYAD OPINED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD AGITATE AGAINST USG POLICY WITH RESPECT TO THE PALESTINE PROBLEM.

9. ADDRESSEES ARE CAUTIONED THAT REPORTS PUBLISHED HERE DIFFER IN DETAIL AS AMONG THE VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS AND RADIO BROADCASTS. FBIS MAY HAVE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF RADIO TUNIS BROADCAST OF TAPE OF SESSION, WHICH WOULD BE MOST ACCURATE ACCOUNT AVAILABLE IF BROADCAST COMPLETE.

10 COMMENT: DESPITE ABU IYAD'S STREE ON DEPARTURE OF FOUR RATHER THAN OF ALL ELEVEN FEDAYEEN FROM TUNIS, ADDRESSEES WILL RECALL THAT MINISTER OF INTERIOR'S COMMUNIQUE (TUNIS 7544) MADE CLEAR THAT BOTH HIJACKERS AND THEIR "COMPANIONS" HAD LEFT TUNIS. NEVERTHELESS, POSSIBILITY STILL REMAINS, CONSISTENT WITH COMMUNIQUE, THAT "SEVEN COMPANIONS" HAVE SEPARATED FROM AND ARE BEING HANDLED DIFFERENTLY FROM THE FOUR HIJACKERS. CONSIDERING ABU IYAD'S HARD-LINE REPURATION, HIS EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN EVENTUAL US RECOGNITION OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PLO SEEMS SURPRISING. WE ARE STILL UNABLE TO ASCERTAIN WHERE-ABOUTS OF ELEVEN TERRORISTS SINCE TUNISIAN OFFICIALS JUST ARE NOT TALKING.
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